

**Remarks:**

In response to the Office Action, the applicants offer the following remarks directed to the claims in the order presented.

A. Claims 1-12: The Office Action rejected claims 1-12 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,498,709 issued to Navia et al. The applicants have canceled claims 1-12, without prejudice to the filing of a continuation application including those claims, to expedite allowance of the subject application.

B. Claims 13-21: The Office Action objects to dependent claim 21 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, namely, claim 13. The Office Action states, however, that claim 21 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Independent claim 13 has been amended to include the allowable subject matter recited in claim 21 and, therefore, constitutes a rewrite of claim 21 in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim 13 (no claims intervene between claims 13 and 21). Consequently, claim 13 has been amended to place that claim into condition for allowance. Claims 14-20 depend from claim 13 and are allowable without further amendment. Claim 21 has been canceled.

C. Claims 22-34: The applicants acknowledge with appreciation the Examiner's indication that claims 22-34 have been allowed. Accordingly, claims 22-34 are retained without further amendment.

D. Claims 35-39: The Office Action rejected claims 35-39 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,498,709 issued to Navia et al. The applicants have canceled claims 35-39, without prejudice to the filing of a continuation application including those claims, to expedite allowance of the subject application.

E. Claims 40-45: The applicants previously canceled claims 40-45.

F. Claims 46-49: The applicants acknowledge with appreciation the Examiner's indication that claims 46-49 have been allowed. Accordingly, claims 46-49 are retained without further amendment.

G. Claims 50-59: The applicants previously canceled claims 50-59.

H. Claims 60 & 61: The applicants acknowledge with appreciation the Examiner's indication that claims 60 and 61 have been allowed. Accordingly, claims 60 and 61 are retained without further amendment.

I. Claims 62-70: The Office Action objects to dependent claim 66 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, namely, claim 62. The Office Action states, however, that claim 66 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Independent claim 62 has been amended to include the allowable subject matter recited in claim 66 and, therefore, constitutes a rewrite of claim 66 in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim 62 (no claims intervene between claims 62 and 66). Consequently, claim 62 has been amended to place that claim into condition for allowance. Claims 63-66 have been canceled, without prejudice to the filing of a continuation application including those claims, to expedite allowance of the subject application. Original claims 67-70 depend from claim 62 and are allowable without further amendment.

J. Claims 71-74: The applicants acknowledge with appreciation the Examiner's indication that claims 71-74 have been allowed. Accordingly, original claims 71-74 are retained without amendment.

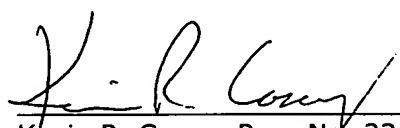
K. Claims 75-86: The applicants previously canceled claims 75-86.

L. Comment on Statement of Reasons for Allowable Subject Matter: Pursuant to 37 C.F.R. § 1.104(e), to the extent that the Examiner's statement of reasons for the indication of allowable subject matter might be construed in any way to limit the scope of the allowed and allowable claims, the applicants respectfully disagree with that statement. Specifically, for example, it is not necessary to identify any particular claim limitation as absent from the prior art for a claim to recite patentable subject matter. Most, if not all, patentable inventions are necessarily combinations of steps or elements.

M. Conclusion: Claims 13 and 62 have been amended and, as amended, distinguish the claimed subject matter from the cited references. Thus, each of pending claims

13-20, 22-34, 46-49, 60-62, and 67-74 are in condition for allowance. The rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103 and the objections should all be withdrawn. Favorable action is earnestly solicited. Finally, the Examiner is invited to call the applicants' undersigned representative if any further action will expedite the prosecution of the application or if the Examiner has any suggestions or questions concerning the application or the present Response. In fact, if the claims of the application are not believed to be in full condition for allowance, for any reason, the applicants respectfully request the constructive assistance and suggestions of the Examiner in drafting one or more acceptable claims pursuant to MPEP § 707.07(j) or in making constructive suggestions pursuant to MPEP § 706.03 so that the application can be placed in allowable condition as soon as possible and without the need for further proceedings.

Respectfully submitted,

  
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